Cebuano Particles and their Functions in the Selected Radio Segments

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the Cebuano-Bisaya particles and their corresponding functions, as well as their frequency of usage between two disk jockeys (DJs) and a random number of callers. The current research involved six (6) chosen 99.5 RT Ninduta Ah! Radio broadcasts, specifically from a segment called *"Itanong Mo Portion."* The DJs and the callers served as the participants for this study. The recorded conversations from the said segment containing the use of the different types of Cebuano-Bisaya particles provided the study's main source of data. Results unveiled that placeholder particles were the most evident among all the types of the Cebuano-Bisaya particles; "word search while holding a turn ranked first as the most common function of the Cebuano-Bisaya particles, followed by *"emphasis,"* "to assert information" as the third and "to convey an attitude" as the fourth. However, the use of "euphemism" and "reformulating clausal structure" provided no data in the study, and the post-nominal type of particles was the least used. Furthermore, between the DJs and the callers, it was found out that the DJs were the frequent users of the Cebuano-Bisaya discourse particles compared to the callers.

Keywords: Cebuano language, discourse particles, radio segment

INTRODUCTION

One of the most widely spoken languages in the Philippines is the Cebuano language, gathering up about 20 million people in Central Visayas, western parts of Eastern Visayas, eastern Negros Island Region, and some major parts in Mindanao (Ager, 2016). Despite being the second most spoken native language in the Philippines with an approximate 20 million speakers (Zorc, 1977; Cinc, 2016), the local language has unfortunately not been completely given as much importance and attention compared to that of the English language, which is generally used as a medium of instruction in schools and universities. However, with the enactment of the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTBMLE) requiring the teaching of the mother tongue language as a separate learning area for Grades 1 and 2, the Cebuano language has finally been given importance. According to Malone (2007), more children will gain confidence in their ability to communicate meaningfully in their mother tongue, which they have built from their knowledge and experience of observing and interacting with people within their community. Additionally, the experience, knowledge, and most especially, the language that children bring with them to school are very significant matters for them to build an important foundation for their learning in the classroom.

Despite the development of the use of the mother tongue language, there are only a few local studies about the language. One particular aspect of the Cebuano-Bisaya language, which has not been investigated by many researchers, is on discourse particles.

The utilization of the Cebuano language is observable in many different communication milieus, such as newspapers, television shows, and radio programs, particularly of those FM radio stations like 99.5 RT Ninduta Ah! Among these communication media, the radio, according to Altheide and Snow (1986, p. 273), is the only mass medium that "follows an exact linear progression of time, keeping pace with the listener's sense of real-time throughout the day." Thus, listeners can tune in anytime to hear and get updates with the latest news, music, weather, and daily traffic report. Additionally, radio can become an open mic forum where people in the society are given a chance to express opinions, legitimize actions, and mobilize fellow listeners (Crittenden, 1971).

The significance of radio endures in the society until now for it remains as a venue for stance, in which it is not only contemporarily limited to. AM broadcasting but also extended in FM radio programs which now offer listeners the opportunity to air out their opinions, ask and seek advice through the variety of segments conducted during radio broadcast.

The dearth of local researches on Cebuano-Bisaya particles and the inevitability of their occurrence during conversations in radio programs are the reasons why the researchers conducted this study. This study aims to determine the frequency of the appearances of Cebuano-Bisaya particles in the selected segment of the 99.5 RT Ninduta Ah! radio broadcast, as well as to look into their functions using Tanangkingsing's (2009) framework.

Dita (2011, in Tanangkingsing, 2012) reported that

discourse particles in the Philippine language are devoid and expletive, as they lack any identifiable meaning outside of discourse. More so, this is similar to what Tanangkingsing (2009) and Aijmer (2002) have mentioned, that discourse particles do not mainly contribute to the content of the utterance, and thus, only play a minor role in the Cebuano grammar.

The first framework by Tanangkingsing (2009) provides the different Cebuano-Bisaya particles' level of discourse: clause-initial particles, clause-final particles, post-nominal particles, and placeholders.

The second framework by Tanangkingsing (2009) identifies the following twenty-one major functions of Cebuano-Particles with examples: agreement, collocation, confirmation marker, demonstrative, disappointment, disbelief, discourse marker (elicitation to the hearer), emphasis, euphemism marker, exaggeration, confrontation or interrogation, imperative, referent is known, reformulating clausal structure, repair marker, tag question, topic marker, assert information, to convey an attitude, warning, and word search while holding a turn. These functions pertain to the Cebuano-Bisaya particles' accurate usage and are the ones most likely to be based as a reference to what the utterance wishes to convey or the underlying meaning.

This study attempted to identify the occurrence of the Cebuano-Bisaya particles and their functions in the radio segment *Itanong* Mo Portion from the 99.5 RT *Ninduta ah!* It also aimed to compare the frequency of the usage of discourse particles between the participants, callers, and the Disc Jockeys (DJs).

1. What are the Cebuano-Bisaya particles, as mentioned by Tanangkingsing (2009), used in the radio segment *Itanong* Mo portion?

2. What are the functions of the Cebuano-Bisaya particles, according to Tanangkingsing (2009), present in 99.5 *Ninduta ah!'s Itanong Mo* Portion?

3. Who uses discourse markers more between the Disc Jockey and caller in the segments *Itanong* Mo Portion?

METHODOLOGY

The data were gathered from the online radio station podcast (http://www.radio.org.ph) containing live streaming of various radio stations in the Philippines including the number one radio station in Cebu, 99.5 RT Ninduta Ah! which is aired from Mondays to Fridays from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

A total of six (6) 99.5 RT "Ninduta ah" radio broadcast sessions served as the researchers' basis for data analysis of the Cebuano-Bisaya particles. The following criteria were considered in selecting the podcasts: (1) Cebuano-particles must be taken from the selected segment of the 99.5 RT Ninduta ah! namely the "*Itanong Mo*" portion and (2) the data must be based on the 99.5 RT Ninduta ah! Radio Broadcast only. The total frequency and occurrence of such Cebuano-particles were determined and analyzed as well as their functions in every conversational radio segment.

The researchers gathered their data for three weeks. For each week, the researchers gathered ten minutes for each radio session of the "*Itanong Mo*" portion and only gathered the data two times a week. Hence, the researchers randomly chose when the data gathering for each week will occur.

The researchers identified the functions of each Cebuano-Bisaya particle found in the selected segment of the 99.5 RT Ninduta Ah! Radio Broadcast. The researchers recorded, listened, and transcribed — with the use of Jefferson's (1985) glossary of transcript symbols — the radio sessions from the segment "*Itanong Mo*" Portion for the analysis and data gathering.

The study used the purposive sampling procedure in identifying the functions of each Cebuano-Bisaya particle found in the selected segment from the 99.5 RT Ninduta Ah! Radio Broadcast.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the frequency of occurrence of the types of Cebuano-Bisaya particles used in the recorded radio segments as well as their percentage to determine which of the types are common and least used by both callers and the DJs.

Table 1. Frequency of Cebuano-Bisaya Particles found in the Selected Radio Segment

Types of Cebuano-Bisaya Particles	F	%
Clause-initial Particles	214	27.94
Clause-final Particles	109	14.23
Post-nominal Particles	75	9.79
Placeholder Particles	**368**	**48.04**
Total	766	100

Table 1 shows that from the gathered segments of the *Itanong Mo* radio broadcast portion of 99.5RT *Nindota Ah*, Placeholder particles ranked first in the classification, garnering 48.04% out of a hundred. Clause-initial particles followed with 27.94%. Totaling 14.23%, clause-final particles came in third. Post-nominal particles came in last, having only 9.79% of particles used out of a hundred percent.

Having a percentage of 48.04, placeholder particles were prominently used by the speakers due to the fact of their conversation's spontaneity. The unrehearsed and casual discourse between the interlocutors moved them to inevitably use placeholder particles, most especially during their word search, as not to sound wooden or avoid having their turn getting taken from them, the speakers, during word search. In comparison to Castro's (2009) study on discourse particles in EFL classrooms, students made great use of placeholder particles (or fillers) compared to the other kinds of discourse particles she presented (e.g. opening frame marker, closing frame marker, topic switchers, etc.).

Table 1.1 exhibits the frequency of the used placeholder

Cebuano-Bisaya particles on the selected radio segment.

Table 1.1. Frequency of Placeholder Particles found in Selected Radio Segments N = 368

Placeholder Particles	(f)	%
Kuan	60	16.30
Kana-ang	52	14.13
Unsa	8	2.17
A	248	67.39
Total	368	100

Although it is not included in Tanangkingsing's (2009) list of Cebuano-Bisaya particles, the researchers have added *a* to the list, in which the researchers refer to Lynn and Zic's (Lynn and Moder, 2004 in Dylgjeri, 2014) definition of particles, stating that particles "are words or phrases that are syntax-independent and do not change the definition of a sentence, and have considerably no meaning." As observed by the researchers, the *a* particle was prominently used by the speakers in contrast to the other discourse particles presented by Tanangkingsing (2009). With this, the researchers found out that out of the four considered placeholder particles, *a* is the commonly uttered particle with 67.39%. It is followed by **kuan** with 16.30%, and **kana-ang** following close by with 14.13%.

As stated by Amiridze, Davis, and Maclaga (2010), placeholders describe items that help the speakers hold the floor while retrieving a word, a topic, or a fleeting association that is seemingly important to the conversation. As mentioned by Tanangkingsing (2009), placeholders, or fillers, function to keep a turn from being taken by another person. A study conducted by Castro (2009) looked into the functions of discourse markers in the EFL classroom, one of those particles' functions being used as pause fillers and turn keepers. In this study, Castro (2009) found out that students mainly used particles to hold the floor and at the same time, as pause fillers. In comparison to this study, the researchers found out that placeholder particles are the most commonly used type of Cebuano-Bisaya particles by the interlocutors, having a total number of three hundred sixty-eight, with a percentage of 48.04%.

As found out by the researchers, the particle *a* is commonly used in the process of a speaker's word search. This coincides with Taboada (2006), in which he stated that particles are frequently used as turn-holding devices. The DJs commonly used the *a* particle for them to hold their turns while searching for the next set of words to utter. Like the other placeholder particles, *a* served as a filler to pauses during word search.

The particle *a* is the most uttered placeholder particle. This can be attributed to the fact that the particle *a*, in contrast to the other three placeholder particles, can be uttered in a prolonged manner without sounding awkward. Also, the particle *a*, only having one syllable, is easier to utter during a person's word search.

Sample 1
(Itanong Mo 4)

C1: *OO niya::: diri sa may gaisano::::↓ (.) **a::::** eight four::: tulo mani ka numero diri (.7) sa may gaisano*

Translation
C1: Yes, and here near Gaisano, a, eight four, there's three numbers here, near Gaisano.

In sample 1, speaker C1 made use of the particle *a* as he took his time to search for the words to utter next. The particle *a* is often uttered in a prolonged manner. Akin to the particle *a* is the English particle *well*. According to Jucker (1993), *well* is used as a 'delay device,' in which it is uttered when the speaker is in the state of searching for the right word to say, or as a 'delaying tactic.'

Table 2 presents the frequency of the corresponding functions of the Cebuano-Bisaya discourse particles found in the selected segment *"Itanong Mo Portion"* from the 99.5 Nindota Ah! Radio broadcast, as well as their percentage to determine which of the different functions and discourse particles are commonly used.

Table 2. The Frequency of the Corresponding Functions of Cebuano-Bisaya Particles found in the Selected Radio Segment "Itanong Mo Portion" from the 99.5 Ninduta Ah! Radio Broadcast

Function of Cebuano-Bisaya Particle	f	%
Agreement	7	0.91
Collocation	10	1.31
Confirmation Marker	24	3.17
Demonstrative	26	3.39
Disappointment	7	0.91
Disbelief	6	0.78
Discourse Marker (Elicitation to the Hearer)	36	4.70
Emphasis	**78**	**10.18**
Euphemism	0	0
Exaggeration	21	2.74
Interrogation or Confrontation	39	5.09
Imperative	31	4.05
Referent is Known	30	3.92
Reformulating Clausal Structure	0	0
Repair Marker	24	3.13
Tag Question	9	1.17
Topic Marker	11	1.44
To Assert Information	**63**	**8.22**
To Convey An Attitude	59	7.70
Warning	2	0.26
Word Search While Holding A Turn	**282**	**36.81**
TOTAL	766	100

Table 2 exhibits that among all the Cebuano-Bisaya particles, three functions appeared to be most evident in the data gathered. The function "word search while holding a turn" has been used by the participants of the data with 36.81%. This is followed by "emphasis" with 10.18% and "to assert information" with 8.22%, the total number of 63 Cebuano-Bisaya particles.

"Word Search While Holding A Turn" appeared to be the most prominent function from the data gathered for the speakers in the call-in talk conversations were most likely to avoid hanging or awkward speech. Apparently, word search while holding a turn function in providing a speaker's point or argument while actually making use

of placeholders particles which consists of word fillers like that of a, *unsa*, and *kuan*. Moreover, the use of word search is more common than those of the other functions for *Itanong Mo* Portion, as a segment involving conversations that are done without much thought, is most likely to conduct informal speech between the participants. It appeared that the use of fillers in replacement for a word in a speaker's utterance is contemporary when a language is used in a relaxed tone and is not suited for serious or official speech.

Word Search while Holding a Turn. This function of Cebuano-Bisaya particles is when a particle is being used as a convenient word to utilize during a word search (Tanangkingsing, 2009).

Sample 2
(Itanong Mo 2 Placeholder particle "*a*")
PJ: *[Well, some use that scary Halloween.*
C: *O:: [(Mao lagi)*
PJ: *[and some just use a:: the word ↓happy, because its-*

Translation
PJ: Well, some use that scary Halloween.
C: Yes, exactly.
PJ: and some just use uhhh, the word, happy, because it's-

Sample 2 reveals that placeholder particle *a* operated by the participant, Papa Joe (PJ), serves as a convenient word to utilize during the time of word search. As stated by Piurko (2015), it basically acts as a filler or delaying tactic used to sustain speech or hold the floor.

Sample 3
(Itanong Mo 2 Placeholder Particle "*kuan*")
C: *[Sayop nga mga kuan pud ba, mga words=*
PJ: *=Depende, depende sad na sa:: imohang gamiton nga words, ingana=*

Translation
C: Wrong uh *kuan* too, words
PJ: It depends. It depends also on the words you use.

In sample 3, placeholder particle *kuan* is used by the participant, caller (c) as filler or a filled pause during word search while holding a turn. Jacobs (2014) explains that filled pauses are actually functional in informing listeners that the speaker needs a pause to collect and organize his or her thoughts to complete an utterance.

Table 3. Frequency Usage of Discourse Particles between the Disc Jockeys and the Callers

Radio Segment	Total no. of DMs used by the DJs	%	Total no. of DMs used by the callers	%
Itanong Mo Portion 1	66	12.45	51	21.34
Itanong Mo Portion 2	75	14.15	25	10.46
Itanong Mo Portion 3	**97**	**18.30**	**54**	**22.59**
Itanong Mo Portion 4	**86**	**16.23**	**34**	**14.23**
Itanong Mo Portion 5	83	15.66	36	15.06
Itanong Mo Portion 6	**123**	**23.20**	**36**	**15.06**
Total	530	100	236	100

Based on the findings from Table 3, it was observed that the Disc Jockeys used more discourse particles, with a total number of 530, compared to the callers who have a total of 236. In all the recorded segments by the researchers, it was always the Disc Jockeys who used more Cebuano-Bisaya particles compared to that of the callers, noting that Itanong mo portion 6 had the highest number of used particles for the Disc Jockeys, while Itanong mo portion 3 for the callers. With the Disc Jockeys having to be the hosts of the program, they initiate conversations not just with the callers who participate during the segment but also towards each other. In the data that the researchers have gathered, there were a number of instances in which speaker (disc jockey) dominated the open conversations because of how frequently he gets carried away with the advice-giving and also because he was the main Disc Jockey, and with the participation and agreement of the other Disc Jockey towards the main Disc Jockey, more Cebuano-Bisaya particles tend to be utilized. On the other hand, the callers only get the chance to talk at the time when they call the station, and oftentimes, they only get the portion of asking questions for the Disc Jockeys to answer. Thus, the utilization of Cebuano-Bisaya discourse particles by the callers results in being less prevalent since their only role is to ask and interrupt at times during the conversations, compared to that of the Disc Jockeys who are always most likely to provide information and further commentaries about a certain subject matter.

Nor (2013) tackled a study about discourse markers in turn-initial positions in which it included the variability of the turns, turn size, and turn content's distribution. Radio talk shows have pre-allocation of turns by radio hosts and interviewees in which there is an evident usage of DMs. In Nor's (2012) study, guest speakers were the key informants of each radio segment, while the hosts occasionally interrupt due to either ask questions or add commentary. It was noted that the guest speakers, being the key informants and the key speakers of the radio segments, were more prone to using discourse particles compared to the hosts of the radio segments. A slight comparison and contrast can be made in this study and to that of Nor's (2012).

In this study of Cebuano-Bisaya particles, DJs, being key informants and hosts of the show, have shown to be more prominent in the usage of discourse particles compared to that of the callers since they were the ones who asked questions and were expected to be experts. On the other hand, the callers use few discourse markers because

they are aware of their roles to simply ask questions and clarify unclear topics. However, this can also be a contrast to that of Nor's (2012) study because other than the hosts being the commentators and asking questions, the hosts in this study take the role of being key informants.

Discourse markers are used to manage, organize and connect ideas or emphasize such utterances in a text. Ergo, the DJs use more particles than that of the callers for the DJs are the ones who provide answers to the latter's questions, as well as pieces of advice. The callers, on the other hand, have already thought of their questions even before pressing the telephone buttons. The DJs commonly use the placeholder particle *a*, especially during word search.

Sample 4
(Itanong Mo 4)
PJ: nahibong ko ana kay *a*::::: diri sa may south kay *a*:::: eight ra man to:::: [sa lapu lapu kay *a*:::::: eight eight eighty two↑

Translation
PJ: I'm shocked with that because, *a*, here in the south because, *a*, it was only eight, in Lapu-lapu, it's, *a*, eight- eight- eighty two!

In sample 4, the DJ made use of the particle *a* three times, all during in word search. The researchers have noticed that the usage of *a* was quite a prominent usage of the DJs when it comes to word search while at the same time holding the floor in the conversation. Akin to that of Jucker's (1993) study of the particle *well* in which the English particle was used as a delay device, uttered whenever the speaker is in the state of word search, or as 'delaying tactic.'

Sample 5
(Itanong Mo 4)
C1: =naa koy panguta-= kana::::ng nag travel man gud ko papa joe sa around south *ba* niya diri pud na (.) NA observe nako *ba* naay mga dagko lagi nga::::::   kana ganing-

Translation
C1: I have a question. I was traveling around South Papa Joe [*ba*], and then it's also here. I have observed [*ba*] that there are big, [kana ganing]-)

As shown in sample 5, the caller made use of the particle *ba* twice, both functioning as an emphasis on the information given by the caller. This is akin to Alavi-Nia and Mozaffari's (2014) study in which Persian discourse particles such as /ha:/, often functions as an emphasis on the speaker's statement.

Although some consider discourse particles as empty, fulfill no semantic role, dependent on their surrounding context, and add no meaning to the sentence structure (Sun, 2013), they play a huge role in conversations considering that people use them often, as observed in this study. Generally speaking, they help guide the hearer's interpretation process of the sentence's context (Blakemore, 2002), acting as filled pauses (Sun, 2013), also

in signaling the speaker's intention to the next turn in the preceding utterances (Fraser, 1999). Due to their constant appearances in the data gathered, it is safe to say that discourse particles have really helped the interlocutors to converse smoothly manner without having long pauses.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the significant findings of the present research, researchers have put together the following conclusions.

Interlocutors make frequent use of Cebuano-Bisaya particles in varying positions in their utterances. Based on the recorded radio segments, Cebuano-Bisaya particles, though perceived by most researches as words without semantic meaning, have important roles in the flow of conversation.

Cebuano-Bisaya particles are very apparent due to their syntactic feature in which they can be found either in the clause-initial position, clause-final position, or added flexibly to an utterance. The Cebuano-Bisaya particles are versatile in a way that they have multiple meanings, which can be based on their function in an utterance. Their meanings can be understood in a context and not in a semantic domain.

The usage of Cebuano-Bisaya particles is both unavoidable by both the Disc Jockeys and the callers for their discourse is usually spontaneous and unrehearsed. In this research, although the Disc Jockeys made use of more discourse particles compared to the callers, both interlocutors used a number of discourse particles in their utterances. Spontaneity and the fact that the discourse is unscripted are the contributing factors of the radio interlocutors' frequent use of discourse particles. Further, since the radio discourse is not done in a face-to-face setting, the use of discourse particles are important to send signals to the opposing party.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are offered for practitioners and future researchers in the field of Linguistics.

(1) Cebuano teachers may use this material as a reference in their lectures should they ever consider including Cebuano-Bisaya particles in their discussions.

(2) Linguists may use this paper as a benchmark should they ever pursue studies in regards to discourse particles, particularly that of the Cebuano-Bisaya language.

(3) Linguistics students may refer to this paper as a source for their farther pursuit of knowledge regarding Cebuano-Bisaya discourse particles.

(4) Future researchers may collaborate with other studies to that of discourse particles such as frequency of usage of discourse particles between female and male callers and/or male and female Disc Jockeys.

(5) Future researchers may conduct a study concerning Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTBMLE) in which Cebuano-Bisaya particles may appear relevant to the classroom based discussion in the near future.

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